Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for protecting electronic files, comprising:

   <u>obtaining a delay number based on delay time period between when a timing signal was transmitted from a remote source and when the timing signal was received;</u>

   obtaining environment information regarding a computer, the environment information including <u>the delay number and</u> data concerning an operating environment of the computer;

   ~~generating~~ <u>creating</u> an encryption key based on the environment information; and

   encrypting an electronic file using the encryption key.

2. (original) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the operation of creating a decryption key based on environment information, wherein the decryption key can be utilized to decrypt the electronic file.

3. (original) A method as recited in claim 2, wherein the encryption key and the decryption key are public key infrastructure (PKI) based keys.

4. (original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the environment information includes location information of the computer.

5. (original) A method as recited in claim 4, wherein the location information specifies a location of the computer within a predetermined range.

6. (original) A method as recited in claim 5, wherein the location information is provided by global positioning satellite (GPS) data.

7. (original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the environment information includes drive information regarding a drive wherein the electronic file will be stored.

8. (original) A method as recited in claim 7, wherein the drive information includes a drive identifier that identifies the particular drive wherein the electronic file will be stored.

9. (original) A method as recited in claim 7, wherein the drive information includes an electronic address assignment of the particular drive wherein the electronic file will be stored.

10. (original) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the environment information includes time information specifying access duration.

11. (original) A method as recited in claim 10, wherein the access duration is a time range indicating a time period when the electronic file can be accessed.

12. (original) A method as recited in claim 11, wherein the electronic file cannot be decrypted at a time outside the time range.

13. (original) A method as recited in claim 10, wherein the access duration is a date range indicating a range of dates when the electronic file can be accessed.

14. (original) A method as recited in claim 13, wherein the electronic file cannot be decrypted at a date outside the date range.

15. (currently amended) A method for protecting electronic files, comprising:

obtaining a first delay number based on delay time period between when a first timing signal was transmitted from a remote source and when the first timing signal was received;

storing an electronic file encrypted using an encryption key, wherein the encryption key is ~~generated~~ created using a first environment profile of a computer, and wherein the environment profile includes the first delay number and data concerning an operating environment of the computer;

obtaining a second delay number based on delay time period between when a second timing signal was transmitted from the remote source and when the second timing signal was received;

obtaining a second environment profile of the computer based on a current operating environment of the computer, wherein the second environment profile includes the second delay number and data concerning an operating environment of the computer;

~~generating~~ creating a decryption key based on the second environment profile; and

decrypting the electronic file using the decryption key.

16. (original) A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the encryption key and the decryption key are further based on a passcode received from a user.

17. (original) A method as recited in claim 16, further comprising the operation of appending the first environment profile to the passcode to generate the encryption key.

18. (currently amended) A method as recited in claim 17, further comprising the operation of appending the current environment profile to the passcode to ~~generate~~ create the decryption key.

19. (original) A method as recited in claim 18, wherein the decryption key cannot decrypt the electronic file when the current environment profile does not match the first environment profile.

20. (original) A method as recited in claim 19, wherein a match occurs when the data in the current environment profile is within a predetermined range of the data in the first environment profile.

21. (original) A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the environment profile includes location information specifying a location of the computer within a predetermined range.

22. (original) A method as recited in claim 21, wherein the location information is provided by global positioning satellite (GPS) data.

23. (original) A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the environment information includes drive information regarding a drive wherein the electronic file will be stored.

24. (original) A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the environment information includes time information specifying access duration, wherein the access duration is a time range indicating a time period when the electronic file can be accessed.

25. (original) A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the environment information includes date information specifying access duration, wherein the access duration is a date range indicating dates that the electronic file can be accessed.

26. (currently amended) A method for protecting electronic files, comprising:

authenticating a digital transaction using a delay number based on <u>a delay time period</u> <u>between when</u> a timing signal ~~received~~ <u>was transmitted</u> from a remote source <u>and when the</u> <u>timing signal was received</u>;

obtaining environment information regarding a computer, the environment information including <u>the delay number and</u> data concerning an operating environment of the computer;

~~generating~~ <u>creating</u> an encryption key based on the environment information; and

encrypting an electronic file using the encryption key.

27.   (canceled)

28. (currently amended) A method as recited in claim ~~27~~ <u>26</u>, wherein the delay in the timing signal is caused by free electrons in a line of sight between the remote source and a receiver.

29. (original) A method as recited in claim 28, wherein the delay in the timing signal is further caused by variations in atmospheric conditions.